

WORSHIP
John 4:19-24

Intro: The story of our Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman is found only in the Gospel of John.

It is an unusual story in many ways:

- (1) Because He as a Jew would have anything to do with her.
- (2) Because of the kind of a woman she was (cf. vv. 17, 18).
- (3) Especially because of the things they talked about: worship, and God.

We observe that, as with people today, the Samaritan woman had

I. CERTAIN FALSE IDEAS ABOUT WORSHIP.

- v. 20 A. That worship is a matter of racial, or national preference. Right from the first this woman was very conscious that our Lord was a Jew, and she was a Gentile!
- v. 20 B. That tradition was the authority. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain." All men are inclined to feel that their way is the right way, and that others must come their way--or be excluded!
- v. 20 C. That worship is primarily a matter of going to the right place, and then of doing the right thing--although she does not even get to this. "This mountain . . . Jerusalem." The Jews were just as guilty as the Samaritans of having the wrong idea here.

Note: IT IS ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT THAT SHE SAYS NOTHING ABOUT WHO IS BEING WORSHIPPED!

Over against this we have

II. WHAT OUR LORD SOUGHT TO TEACH US ABOUT WORSHIP. Let us notice the lessons carefully.

- A. Worship is not limited to any place--and it never has been. Cf. v. 21 with v. 23. He was not talking about some future time, but He was talking about that time.

Read the OT carefully and you will note that the sacrifices had to be brought to the Temple, but that worship could take place anywhere!

- B. Worship is not a matter for each nation to decide, nor is it a matter for personal choice. Worship is determined by the Word of God. It is a matter for revelation from God. Cf. v. 22.

- C. He introduces an important thought concerning God. Cf. v. 21, "worship the Father."

This woman was concerned about "our fathers" (v. 20) when she needed to know about "the Father."

He is only the Father of His children, and you cannot be His child without receiving Christ. Cf. John 1: 11-13. How important it is to have this truth.

So this woman was having her eyes opened to things which she had never heard before.

- D. True worship (even by the children of God) must be "in spirit and in truth" (vv. 23, 24).

What does this mean? The Lord was evidently pointing out the primary differences between Jewish worship and Samaritan worship—beside the fact that both of them looked upon it primarily as a national matter.

The Jews had the truth, but they lacked the spirit (with a small "s"). The Samaritans had the spirit, but they lacked the truth.

The two must be combined if there is to be true worship.

- (1) It must be "in spirit," i.e., from the heart—something primarily inward, not outward. Compare Isa. 1 and Isa. 29:13 ("Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men . . .").
- (2) It must be "in truth." It must be right. It must be according to the truth.

Here again we are brought to see the importance of the Word of God, and of bringing our lives into harmony with that Word.

- E. He discloses the fact that the Father is seeking worshippers (of a certain kind) more than worshippers are seeking Him.

Right at this very point in the life of our Lord, the Father is seeking the heart of this lowly Samaritan woman. What grace!

Finally

- F. He gives this woman one of the greatest lessons He ever gave to anyone—a lesson in theology: "God is a Spirit."

So this is really the second thing He tells her about God, but the first had just as much to do with her as it did with "the Father."

What did the Lord mean for her to learn from this? Surely more than we can possibly see.

- (1) That God is not a man, and therefore He is not limited so that He can only be in one place at one time.
- (2) He is invisible, so you cannot see Him. But this in no way throws doubt upon His existence.
- (3) Since He is Spirit, there is nothing that we can bring to Him by way of a gift which He needs.

Cf. 1 Kings 8:27, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built."

Also, Acts 7:48-50, "Nevertheless, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What house will ye build me?' saith the Lord. 'Or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?'"

And, Acts 17:24, 25, "God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."

What truth! "God is a Spirit."

Concl: So all of these things must be kept in mind if we are to know what it is to worship Him.

What is worship? It is prostrating ourselves (at least in heart) before Him ^{TO EXPRESS OUR LOVE, OUR DEPENDENCE, OUR SUBMISSION TO HIM.}

Cf. Luke 7:36-50.